



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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Editor: Mick Klemesrud, 515/281-8653
mick.klemesrud@dnr.state.ia.us

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IOWA SETS NEW HUNTING SAFETY RECORD

DES MOINES - The 2004 hunting season in Iowa was the safest on record with 17 hunting related injuries and zero fatalities. The investigation into a fatality initially thought was hunting related was determined by the Polk County Medical Examiner to have been a suicide.

Rod Slings, recreation safety program supervisor with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources said he credits hard work by the 1,800 volunteer hunter education instructors and the new blaze orange requirement as the biggest factors

“This has been a long time goal of the department and while one injury is too many, having a year with no fatalities is tremendous,” Slings said. Much of the hunter education course is taken from investigations into hunting incidents. The DNR began tracking hunting related incidents in 1964.

The number one cause of hunting related injuries is swinging on game or shooting at running deer.

“We are now seeing hunting incidents become news because they are so few,” he said. “And I believe that can be traced directly to the requirement of hunter education.”

The Iowa legislature passed a law requiring hunters born after Jan. 1, 1967, to successfully complete a hunter education course. Each year, another 12,000 to 15,000 hunters receive safety training in the courses. “Hunting is part of our heritage and is an important tradition in our state. Anytime a hunter hears of an incident happening, they

will be reminded of how much safer they are in the field today than when all this started 40 years ago,” Slings said. “Hunting is a safe activity and is getting safer.”

For more information, contact your local conservation officer or Slings at 515-281-8652.

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A LITTLE BIT ABOUT A WHOLE LOT

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

At first glance, the chain saw seemed a little extreme. Within a couple minutes, though, DNR fisheries biologist Gary Siegwarth had carved a three-foot-by-four foot chunk out of the ice cover on North Prairie Lake, in Cedar Falls. Across the north end of the lake, more normal six or eight inch holes dotted the surface; drilled the conventional way, with ice augers.

Unlike the rest of the crowd, though, Siegwarth was here for a ‘deposit,’ not a withdrawal. He and fisheries technician John Richmond finished connecting the heavy-duty tubes to the side of their truck. With the flip of a lever, the tanks emptied their payload. Hundreds of gallons of water and 1,800 trout gushed through the just cut opening into the 12-acre lake. And more than 200 ice anglers got to work.

Normally reserved for the coldwater streams of northeast Iowa, trout hit the bright lights and big cities during the winter. In hot weather, trout could not survive in these urban fishing holes. The icy cover, though, guarantees that they’ll get through the winter just fine in Waterloo/Cedar Falls, Dubuque, Mason City and the Des Moines area. And if the popularity of the urban trout program spreads, there might be another community or two that could tout trout fishing without leaving town. “There are lots of people who don’t even know about the trout program,” concedes Siegwarth, who manages the Big Spring rearing station near Elkader. “It’s a stepping stone for people, once they have their trout stamp, to come try it in northeast Iowa. They would really enjoy it.”

Not that they weren’t having a good time here. The last trout were still on the truck when the first hurrah went up from an ice angler 20 yards from the stocking point. Within 15 minutes, the ice was dotted with half to 3/4 pound trout that were now on ice, before heading for the frying pan. “Oh yeah (I’d go this summer),” acknowledged Steve Harris, of Cedar Falls, as we looked over the three sleek trout at his feet. “My boy goes once in awhile with his grandmother. I’d like to do that, too.”

The Cedar Valley Walleye Club had promoted the weekend stocking as a family fishing day, collecting giveaways, too, from area stores. “It was kind of nice to see a lot of kids show up,” admitted club spokesman Carl Teske. “Some have never fished for trout before. I talked with parents who thought they’d just bring their kids out for a good

time.” Shawn Anderson was one of them. “I got a lot of nibbles, but they took all my minnows,” bemoaned the 12-year old. “After awhile, I finally got one. Then I got this second one,” admitting that he really liked trout fishing. Nearby, nine-year-old David Schmadeke was in the hot spot. Three trout were on the ice beside him. His jigging movement was effective. He had three or four more hits before bringing in a fourth fish.

The urban trout program played to similar crowds elsewhere this winter. “It’s a way to get it right into these communities. I think there’s room to expand it,” lauds Siegwarth. “It’s a great outdoor recreation. And it’s close to home.”

Home Ice Advantage

There’s more than just trout under there. Anglers on Lake Macbride were clustered in several areas late Wednesday, from the high lines to a point off Cottage Reserve and beyond. “They’re catching lots of bluegills in eight to 12 feet of water; in the brush,” relays DNR fisheries management biologist Paul Sleeper. “An occasional walleye, just before dark; crappie in the deeper water.” Despite daytime temperatures above freezing this week, Sleeper says most areas still have sufficient ice. “Generally, it’s not a problem, unless we would get some rain; some flowing water.” He cautions that any water with a current; such as Coralville Reservoir, is going to see weakening ice ahead of more stationary bodies.

Hungry Wildlife Concerns Ease

Those warmer temps mean the snow cover is slowly receding. More bare ground reduces the danger of predation for wandering wildlife, looking for food beneath that ice and snowpack. Species ranging from pheasants and turkeys to backyard songbirds are beginning to find food closer to cover as the bare spots return. On the plus side, for human birdwatchers at least, is the chance to increase their winter bird lists. I stepped outside just before dark a few days ago and spooked 20 or 25 cardinals hunkered down in the hedge between our sunflower feeders and the neighbor’s. And though he didn’t wait until I grabbed my camera, a male pileated woodpecker stopped by the suet feeder late last month.

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MORE THAN 3 MILLION TREE AND SHRUB SEEDLINGS AVAILABLE

AMES - With the spring 2005 planting season approaching, the State Forest Nursery has more than 3 million tree and shrub seedlings available for purchase by landowners for wildlife habitat plantings, riparian buffers to protect waterways, shelterbelts and other conservation plantings.

“The state forest nursery inventory includes large numbers of native oaks such as bur, red, pin, swamp white and white; black walnut for nut and lumber production, silver maple, willow and poplar for along streams, and spruces and cedar for shelterbelts,” said Roger Jacob, manager of the nursery. “These species can be used for several conservation reserve practices. Supplies of native shrubs such as high bush cranberry, ninebark, wild plum and various dogwoods are also in good supply.”

The nursery also has specialty packets available for smaller planting. The songbird packet has 20 plants and four different wildlife packets have 200 plants each.

Landowners can easily order from the State Forest Nursery in time for spring planting by calling the toll free number (800) 865-2477 Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or order online at www.iowadnr.com/forestry/. Nursery stock prices range from \$25 to \$45 per hundred depending on species and size. There is a minimum order of 500 plants except for songbird (\$20) and wildlife packets (\$90).

Help restore some of Iowa’s wildlife habitat and forests this spring by planting trees and shrubs on your property.

For more information, contact Jacob at 1-800-865-2477.

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NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION TO MEET THURSDAY

DES MOINES - The Natural Resource Commission (NRC) of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will meet at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, Feb. 10, in the fourth floor conference room, Wallace State Office Bldg., in Des Moines. The meeting is open to the public.

Members of the NRC are Joan Schneider, Randy Duncan, Paul Christiansen, Carol Kramer, William Sullivan, Richard Francisco and Janice Marcantonio. The DNR Director is Jeffrey Vonk.

The following is the agenda for the February meeting.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of January Meeting
- Director’s Remarks
- Construction Projects
- Land Acquisition
 - Sweet Marsh Wildlife Management Area, Bremer County – Harms
 - Wapsipinicon State Park, Jones County – McNamara
- South Twin Lakes Boundary Agreement
- Chapter 18 Leases

- Dale Entner – Clear Lake
- Hans Willadsen – East Okoboji, Dickinson County
- Conservation and Recreation Donations
- Special Boat Donation
- Fisheries Habitat with Local Entities Grant Review
- Wildlife Habitat with Local Entities Grant Review
- 2004 Dock Permitting Survey Results
- Final Rule – Chapter 94, Nonresident Deer Hunting
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 105, Deer Population Management Zones
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 48, Inspection of Permanently Moored Vessels
- Backbone State Park Concession Contract
- General Discussion
- Items for Next Meeting, March 10 in Des Moines

For more information, contact Karyn Stone at 515-281-8650.

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